

I am in favor of abolishing the Morse Code requirement. We must keep a balance between what was a practical consideration in the early 1900s vs where Morse Code was a standard for commercial ships and others. Technology has rapidly moved Amateur radio forward especially in the last ten years. Electronics, computer chips with fast computers, new modalities such as PSK31, or internet relays with Echolink etc have opened new portals of communication. I am amazed in discussions with friends at work who discover that I am a licensed HAM operator that the public perception remains that Morse Code is a requirement to become a licensed Amateur radio operator. Several have said that at some point in the last ten years, they would have explored Amateur radio if not for the belief that of a requirement to learn Morse Code to obtain a license. They further extrapolate to a belief that they did not want to learn Morse which they consider an very old modality that helped the early train systems communicate along the rail lines.

I can fully appreciate and respect the tradition of Morse Code with the many who learned and remain proficient with the modality, but other areas of technology in society required that they adapt to the times and move forward with retooling of their requirements. In computer languages, do we require our new students to learn some of the antiquated computer coding language that is no longer practical or applicable but for the sense of tradition?? Nothing prevents Amateur operators from learning Morse on their own.

The comment that Amateur radio will degenerate in the quality of operators is difficult to justify. If amateur radio remains faithful with the examination process entrusted to it by the FCC, then this should not occur. If this argument is truly valid, then technician licenses/2 meters would have deteriorated already to some of the behaviors seen in the Citizens band spectrum, but to the credit of Amateurs and the process, it has not occurred.

The FCC and we in the Amateur community have a responsibility to reinvigorate interest in Amateur radio in these troubled times where the country is fighting the war on terror. Amateur radio represents a significant communication asset which largely depends on volunteers and assists local officials during time of crisis. Unfortunately, Amateur numbers have dwindled coupled with an aging membership. Retooling of the licensing requirements by dropping Morse Code as a requirement will help change a public perception of Amateur radio and hopefully allow for an increase in those who have an personal interest in Amateur radio with a desire for a public service role.

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